

STATE OF CONNECTICUT – COUNTY OF TOLLAND
INCORPORATED 1786



TOWN OF ELLINGTON

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JAMES M. PRICHARD
Deputy First Selectman

MELINDA M. FERRY
A. LEO MILLER, JR.
DAVID E. STAVENS
RONALD F. STOMBERG
JOHN W. TURNER

LORI L. SPIELMAN
First Selectman

BOARD OF SELECTMEN
Special Meeting
Monday, April 25, 2016
Town Hall – Meeting Hall

Minutes

SELECTMEN PRESENT: Lori L. Spielman, Melinda M. Ferry, A. Leo Miller, James M. Prichard, David E. Stavens, Ronald F. Stomberg, John W. Turner

OTHERS PRESENT: Francie Berger, Hall Memorial Library; Ellen O'Shaughnessy, Chair, Robert Harvey and Mark Joyse: Charter Revision Commission; Tom Palshaw; Deanna Wambolt; Kris Picard-Wambolt; Kenyon Shores; Tom Sullivan; Timothy Webb, Public Works Director/WPCA Administrator; Sandy Cohen; Rick Neal.

I. CALL TO ORDER

First Selectman Spielman called the meeting of the Board of Selectmen (BOS) to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. CITIZENS' FORUM

Mr. Palshaw submitted a letter (attached) for the consideration of the Board of Selectmen.

III. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. Hall Memorial Library – Holi: A Celebration of Spring Event

Ms. Spielman noted that Hall Memorial Library was able to go through all the boards they needed to in order to get approval and obtained permits from the State Department of Transportation.

Mr. Stavens noted that the date of Holi is also the date of First Communion at Saint Luke's Church. Ms. Berger said she had talked to Saint Luke's Church and noted that Sergeant Santa was in the process of determining how many officers to devote to Holi.

MOVED (TURNER), SECONDED (MILLER), AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO GRANT THE REQUEST OF THE HALL MEMORIAL LIBRARY TO HOLD THE HOLI: A CELEBRATION OF SPRING EVENT ON THE TOWN GREEN ON SATURDAY, MAY 7, 2016 BETWEEN 12:30 PM AND 5:00 P.M. INCLUDING SET-UP AND CLEAN-UP PROVIDED ALL NECESSARY TOWN AGENCY APPROVALS AND STATE PERMITS ARE OBTAINED. FURTHER RESOLVED, TO CLOSE CHURCH STREET DURING THE HOLI EVENT.

B. 2016-2017 Annual Town Budget Meeting

Ms. Spielman noted that the BOS has to stay on schedule as per the Charter.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. Charter Revision Commission Presentation of Report

Mrs. O'Shaughnessy began by recounting the meeting schedule of the Charter Revision Commission (CRC). She noted that some of the recommendations had been inspired by prior CRCs but she acknowledged that the only thing most people wanted to talk about was the possibility of hiring a professional manager for the Town of Ellington. She said that the CRC had decided to recommend a Town Manager rather than a Town Administrator though she noted that her commission's report was incomplete and did not include all the language changes necessary in order to hire a Town Manager. She requested an extension of one to two months for the CRC.

Mrs. O'Shaughnessy spoke on the Town Manager, she said that there is not much of a difference between a Town Manager and a Town Administrator when there is a BOS in place. She acknowledged that the recommendation of a Town Administrator might have been more palatable to the BOS but noted that the Town Manager was a more helpful addition to the Town.

Mrs. O'Shaughnessy informed the BOS that they were well within their rights to reject the recommendation of a Town Manager and look into hiring a Town Administrator if that were their preference.

Mr. Miller said that it was his understanding that a Town Manager reports to the BOS while a Town Administrator reports to the First Selectman.

Mrs. O'Shaughnessy noted that there are eleven towns in Connecticut that have both a Town Manager and a BOS. She said that the CRC had talked to a number of Town Managers and Town Administrators.

Ms. Spielman asked if the CRC had talked to any employees serving under a Town Manager. Mrs. O'Shaughnessy responded that they had not.

Ms. Spielman informed Mrs. O'Shaughnessy that there is no provision to extend the term of the CRC. She said that everything must be discussed in detail at the public hearing and that the public will be especially curious about the financial impact of hiring a Town Manager.

Mr. Prichard declared that he would not vote to have a First Selectman and a Town Manager due to the dual salaries. Ms. Spielman echoed this sentiment.

Mr. Miller said that the Town was likely looking in the range of \$140,000 for a Town Manager's salary. He suggested lowering the pay of the First Selectman to somewhere in the range of 15 percent of the Town Manager's salary. Mr. Prichard asked what the First Selectman would be paid to do if a Town Manager were hired. Mrs. O'Shaughnessy suggested that there are two sides to the current duties of the First Selectman, the political side and the administrative side, she implied that if a Town Manager were hired the First Selectman would still maintain his or her political duties.

Mrs. O'Shaughnessy said that if the Town decides to hire a Town Manager there is a whole process beyond Charter revision that has to be gone through. She noted that there are organizations set up to help towns with major changes like the one suggested. She noted the precarious fiscal state of the State and said that the towns that will survive and prosper are those with professional management.

Mrs. O'Shaughnessy noted that the Town's bond rating could be better with a Town Manager. Mr. Prichard said that nearly every town with a better bond rating than Ellington had a much larger grand list.

Mrs. O'Shaughnessy said that professionals are skilled at finding sources of revenue. Mr. Prichard asked if the State also has a lot of professionals. Mrs. O'Shaughnessy countered that the State has a lot of elected officials.

Mrs. O'Shaughnessy said that the Town Manager would be non-political. Mr. Prichard found this hard to believe.

Mrs. O'Shaughnessy noted that this was simply a recommendation and was now subject to the whims of the BOS. She thought it would add to the Town's efficiency if the CEO did not have to worry about being elected every two years.

Mr. Turner criticized the CRC's lack of detail and said that very detailed questions would be asked at the public hearing. Mrs. O'Shaughnessy countered that the CRC included very specific language in their report.

Mr. Turner expressed concern about the role of the First Selectman under a Town Manager system. He stated that the public needs more detail about the proposed new role of the First Selectman. Mrs. O'Shaughnessy responded by reading some of the possible duties of the First Selectman. Mr. Turner said he didn't see those responsibilities as comprising a full-time position. Mr. Miller said it was probably understood that if the Town of Ellington went to a Town Manager system the First Selectman would become a part-time position.

Mr. Joyse suggested that the CRC was responsible for Charter changes, not policy changes. He implied that the BOS was placing their policy obligations onto the CRC. He hoped that the CRC provided enough information for the BOS to present the recommended changes from a policy perspective at the public hearing.

Mr. Harvey echoed Mr. Joyse's statements and hoped that over the next 45 days the BOS would access the collective knowledge of the CRC in preparing for their public hearing.

Mr. Neal acknowledged that most recommendations of the CRC are reasonable but he suggested that if the First Selectman needed help she could simply hire an assistant. He declared that the First Selectman was put into power by the people and he wanted her to run the Town. He suggested that, per Charter Section 703, the First Selectman had the power to hire an administrator. Mr. Harvey responded that the Town Manager would be granted power by the elected BOS. He said that towns are getting more complicated to run and he wanted the most qualified person to administrate the Ellington. Mrs. O'Shaughnessy disagreed with Mr. Neal's interpretation of Section 703.

Mr. Prichard asked why the CRC decided to leave the First Selectman intact. Mr. Harvey responded that the First Selectman is in a very important position in regards to directing public policy.

Mr. Prichard objected to the Town's CEO no longer being elected by the public.

Ms. Spielman opened the floor to public comments.

Mr. Close thanked the CRC and noted that all the non-Town Manager recommendations looked good. He noted that the Town Manager could help with institutional memory but that the same institutional memory gains could be achieved with proper information storage and documentation.

Mr. Cohen asked Ms. Spielman if she needed help running the Town. Ms. Spielman responded that she did not.

Mr. Turner was concerned with the CRC's recommended revision that gave the Fire Marshal the right to hire and fire people in his office. He did not think it was necessary.

Mr. Turner suggested deleting the recommended changes to Section 808.

Mr. Turner expressed concern regarding changes to Section 923 – Emergency Services.

Ms. Ferry complimented the incredible amount of work and research that the CRC went through. She said the CRC was asked to review the form of government and they did their job admirably – she continued by reminding the BOS that further efforts were in their hands. Ms. Spielman also complimented the CRC.

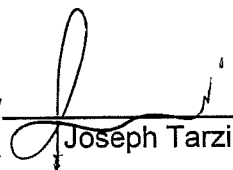
Mr. Miller suggested a spelling correction in Section 205 from "Board of Selectman" to "Board of Selectmen." He also suggested changing Section 924(f) from saying "the Board" to saying "the Board of Selectmen."

MOVED (TURNER), SECONDED (STOMBERG), AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ACKNOWLEDGE RECEIPT OF THE CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION DRAFT REPORT. FURTHER TO HOLD A PUBLIC HEARING ON MONDAY, JUNE 6, 2016 AT 7:00 P.M. AT THE TOWN HALL TO ALLOW CITIZENS TO COMMENT ON THE PROPOSED CHARTER REVISIONS.

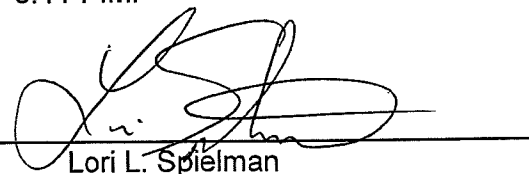
V. ADJOURNMENT

MOVED (MILLER), SECONDED (PRICHARD) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADJOURN THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN AT 8:11 P.M.

Submitted by


Joseph Tarzi

Approved by


Lori L. Spielman

4-25-2016

The Ellington Charter Revision Commission (CRC) recently held a public hearing regarding recommended changes to the town charter. Many of the recommendations were for minor changes. The one that attracted the most attention was the addition of a town manager position.

This recommendation would not change the form of government. The Board of Selectmen (BOS) and Board of Finance (BOF) would remain the same. The public attendees raised some key questions.

1. What is wrong with what we have?

- The Budget process;
Suffers from low public participation,
Dept heads must attend multiple redundant after hour meetings,
Investment returns (earnings) are below potential,
When should we go to referendum?
- The 1st selectman as CEO;
Fewer candidates are willing to run for 1st selectman,
Transition to new 1st selectman has potential problems
Example: (Thompson CT),
Learning curve for 1st selectman is steep,
Institutional memory (Short 2 year terms)
What if no one runs for 1st selectman?
- Grant application process;
Potential missed grant opportunities,
Disorganized grant procedures, example: DEEP turf field grant
 - The original request was for \$500,000 for field lighting only.
When the grant offered was presented to the BOS the project had grown to \$1.4 million and the grant was \$1.0 million.
 - Was the BOS aware of the expanded grant prior to acceptance meeting?
 - Was the Grant application performed by a town agency or by the booster club?
 - The field involved was a school field, was the BOE or school administration involved, or even have knowledge of the grant?
 - Was the BOF involved with the process prior to acceptance meeting?

2. Why do we need a manager / administrator?

- State and federal requirements and mandates are becoming more complex. The 1st selectman's position has become a full time job.
- A town manager would run the day to day operations and be accountable to the BOS. The BOS would perform the more strategic policy or planning functions.
- If the 1st selectman's position were more of a policy / planning function it could become part time and would expand the pool of electorate willing and able to run for office. The BOS would be accountable and responsive to the needs of the voters.
- A town manager could streamline the budget process; work with various departments and agencies daily during normal work hours and make the budget presentation to the BOS and BOF. The budget would still need approval by the voters.
- Potential retirement of key people: If the town finance officer and chairman of the BOF were to retire at about the same time the town could find it unable to meet its requirements. A town manager could supply the necessary institutional memory until the critical positions could be filled.

3. How would we pay for a town manager?

- The 1st selectman's position could again become a part time position with a lower compensation.
- Other towns with town managers have achieved higher credit ratings resulting in lower borrowing costs. Ellington's bond rating is Aa3, so there is room for improvement.
- The town manager could find lower cost options by combining our needs with those of surrounding towns resulting in lower costs. (Example: healthcare premiums)
- Many town managers recover their cost of pay and benefits through increase participation in grants and programs.

4. Other Ideas:

- The budget process should include Senior Center presentations before the public hearing to encourage more public participation.
- This presentation should be recorded then shown on community TV.
- If the budget is to be voted on at town meeting, absentee ballots should be made available so that people who are unable to attend can have a vote.
- To make the decision on whether the budget should go to referendum or be voted on during the town meeting a trigger point should be set. If budget results in a tax increase of more than (X) mills the budget would go to referendum.

5. Conclusion

The Hall Memorial Library has a Board of Directors but the day to day operation is run by a professional librarian, it works well.

We would never consider running our schools with just a Board of Education without the leadership of a professional superintendent to run the day to day operation. Why would we want anything less for the whole town?